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New CIA nominee considered

White House now shying from Gates

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WASHINGTON—The White House is seeking a possible replacement for Robert Gates as its nominee to head the CIA, according to congressional sources, and Senate Republican Leader Bob Dole on Sunday recommended Gen. Brent Scowcroft for the job.

Scowcroft, former national security adviser under President Gerald Ford and who served on the presidential review board that investigated the U.S.-Iran arms affair, could not be reached for comment.

Dole [R., Kan.] and other Republican leaders told President Reagan Friday that Gates' nomination was in trouble, even though Gates was not directly implicated in the Tower Board's report, sources said. Dole and the others told Reagan that the report made the CIA look bad, and that rubbed off on Gates, 43, a career CIA man who was deputy to former CIA director William Casey.

One congressional source said Sunday that as a result, "there is an active move to look at other folks" on the part of the White House. But the administration has not yet withdrawn Gates'



Robert Gates

nomination.

Dole said Scowcroft would make a good candidate for the CIA post, which Howard Baker, who was named White House chief of staff after the Tower report was released Thursday, had turned down this year.

Dole was asked on NBC-TV's "Meet The Press" whether he thought Gates' nomination should be withdrawn.

"I know it's been discussed at the White House," Dole said, explaining that he told Reagan

last week that Gates' nomination "could be in some difficulty if there was a demand" for a quick vote.

"I would guess that there would be some judgment made on this early this week" at the White House, Dole said.

The Senate Intelligence Committee will meet Wednesday to consider Gates' confirmation and to set a timetable for voting. Sen. David Boren [D., Okla.], chairman of the committee, has said he wants an early vote to avoid a lack of leadership at the CIA.

Sen. Sam Nunn [D., Ga.], a member of the committee, said over the weekend that Gates had a "51 to 49" percent chance of being turned down by the committee.

Sen. Bill Bradley [D., N.J.], another member of the committee and one of the lawmakers who was highly critical of Gates during two days of public confirmation hearings last month, was especially concerned by a Tower Board finding that the CIA had "tailored its intelligence assessment on Iran to fit the needs of policy makers at the White House." Bradley and others want to ask Gates more questions about that assessment.

Gates came under considerable fire from Bradley and others for failing to investigate when he first heard speculation about a diversion of profits to the Nicaraguan rebels stemming from the U.S. sale of weapons to Iran. Gates defended himself by saying the CIA was under orders to stay as far away as

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possible from any private funding of the rebels, known as contras, in order to avoid even the appearance of violating a congressional ban on assistance to the guerrillas.

A source close to the Intelligence Committee said Gates doesn't come out "looking all that badly" in the Tower Board report. But he said he thought the agency as a whole came off "not that well." He said the investigators found "a level of involvement" by the CIA in National Security Council aide Oliver North's private contra-aid efforts that "is maybe greater than we might have known."

The Tower Board reported that Gates supplied North, a marine lieutenant colonel, with intelligence on the Soviet threat to Iran, information that North passed on

to Iranian intermediary Manucher Ghorbanifar in Paris in March, 1986.

This apparently is a reference to the CIA assessment, prepared while Gates was directly responsible for intelligence analysis, that the Tower Board found was prepared in conjunction with the NSC staff.

The report also quoted a memo from former national security adviser John Poindexter to North in mid-summer of 1986 that mentioned Gates. In response to North's suggestion that Poindexter pressure the CIA to use North's network of former military and intelligence officials after \$100 million in new congressional aid began last October, Poindexter wrote: "I did tell Gates that I thought the private effort should be phased out."

Then Poindexter said: "Please talk to Casey about this. I agree with you."

This reference could be somewhat damaging to Gates in that it suggests he knew in some detail about the private aid network that North had established. On the other hand, the CIA was allowed at this time to provide intelligence to the contras.

The report strongly criticized Casey for apparently having "acquiesced in" North's "exercise of direct operational control over the Iranian operation."

The board said: "There is no evidence, however, that director Casey explained this risk to the President or made clear to the President that Lt. Col. North, rather than the CIA, was running the operation. . . . Indeed, director Casey should have gone further and pressed for operational re-

sponsibility to be transferred to the CIA."

The board also said Casey, who resigned last month after undergoing brain cancer surgery in December, should have been more skeptical of Israeli intentions and of Ghorbanifar's credibility and should have "taken the lead in keeping the question of congressional notification alive."

The richest detail of the Tower report dealt with Ghorbanifar's failure of a polygraph test and Casey's decision to nevertheless keep relying on him.

The report quoted from a memo by retired CIA official George Cave reporting that Ghorbanifar was tested at a Washington hotel on Jan. 11, 1986. It showed that the examiner found evidence of deception in Ghorbanifar's answers to 13 of 15 relevant questions. The memo indicated that the truthfulness of his responses to the other two questions was inconclusive.

Among the answers that appeared to be deceptive were Ghorbanifar's denials that he was trying to deceive the CIA about his Iranian contacts' influence over Islamic Jihad, a pro-Iranian Shiite Moslem group that is holding some of the American hostages in Lebanon.

Cave said the polygraph examiner concluded that Ghorbanifar "was indeed a fabricator of evidence." Cave noted that lie-detector tests taken by Ghorbanifar in March and June, 1984, "had produced the same conclusion."

Despite all of this, the report said, the White House decided to keep using Ghorbanifar as an intermediary, with Casey concurring in the decision.